

# Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



21 July 1998

Make sure that your mind is not wandering outside, and then cultivate the proper motivation for listening to these profound teachings on the lam rim, which is that we receive them in order to achieve the complete state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Along with this bodhicitta motivation also generate the strong intention that you will put into practice whatever you study to achieve this goal.

## 422.321.222.4 The Actual Meditation on Exchanging Self with Others

བདག་གཞན་བརྗེ་བའི་བསམ་པ་དངོས།

The fourth subheading of the method of Exchanging Self with Others is The Actual Meditation on Exchanging Self with Others.

Your previous meditations on the disadvantages of the self-cherishing mind resulted in the understanding that it is the source of all undesired things. Then, after thinking of the advantages of cherishing other beings, which is the source of all the things that you desire, you come to the point where you realise that it is necessary to exchange these two attitudes.

What is the meaning of exchanging self with others? It does not imply that you actually imagine exchanging yourself with others. Rather the meaning is to exchange the self-cherishing mind for the mind of caring for other beings.

In this meditation you replace the self-cherishing mind with the mind which cherishes others, because you understand the advantages of the latter and the disadvantages of the former. Where you had the mind that totally ignores others, you now cherish them.

Thus in our mind we change the object of cherishing from ourself to other sentient beings. This is possible to achieve since it is just a matter of training our mind, and we do this by thinking over and over again of the shortcomings of self-cherishing, and the advantages of cherishing others. At the same time this also maintains our motivation to continue to strive to eradicate self-cherishing and replace it with the mind that cherishes other beings

The most important thing in this meditation is to see the faults of self cherishing, and realise that if it is not overcome then our whole mental attitude becomes fixed and inflexible, which makes it very difficult to develop any qualities in our mind. Thus the underlying meaning of “exchanging” is the same as the way we exchange material goods. Here we are exchanging one attitude for another because the mind which cherishes others has more advantages.

If our inner mental continuum cannot be subdued by engaging in meditations such as this, then there is no hope of subduing our uncontrolled, untamed mind. We have to try to understand how effective this meditation is in

subduing this untamed mind, and thereby enhancing our inner peace and happiness.

## 422.321.222.5 With these serving as a basis; The Meditation on Giving and Taking:

དེ་ལ་རྟེན་ནས་གཏོང་ལེན་བསྐྱོན་ཅུ་ལ།

The first two headings of the Seven Point Thought Transformation text are:

1. The preliminary teaching on type of life.
2. The actual teaching on true bodhicitta mind.

Within this second heading there are five subheadings:

Equalising self with other

1. Disadvantages of cherishing self
2. Advantages of cherishing others
3. The actual meditation on exchanging self with others
4. The actual meditation on giving and taking

This giving and taking meditation involves having all sentient beings as an object, focussing on them with a strong compassion, and then performing the meditation of taking. Then one focuses on all beings with strong love and performs the meditation of giving.

The root text says

Practise a combination of giving and taking.

Commence taking progressively from your own side.

Usually at this point in teaching about thought transformation there is an elaborate teaching on love and compassion. However as we have already discussed the definition of love and compassion in detail we shall not go through it again.

In essence compassion is what we feel whenever we see any other beings caught in suffering and pain. When we have compassion we can never be indifferent, as we have this spontaneous wish for that being to be free from suffering. With compassion it is unpleasant to observe the suffering of other beings. If you drag a hard metal on the floor it creates an unpleasant sound that goes right through your body. Likewise compassion pervades your whole body driving you to help beings to be free from suffering. Similarly, love is the genuine wish or desire to give happiness to other beings, and it arises when we observe any being who is lacking happiness pleasure or joy. With love we feel a strong wish for them to have this happiness.

To actually develop love and compassion, as opposed to just wishfully thinking about it, we must train in the meditation on giving and taking. In practice the intensity of our love and compassion determines whether we actually do something to free others from suffering, or to provide them with whatever they seek. This intensity does not necessarily depend upon whether we can actually solve all of their problems, or give them what they want. Consider the situation of someone who is begging for food or money.

There are those who, without giving it a thought give all that they have, perhaps even more than they can afford, and there are others who do nothing despite having the capacity to give.

The question of whether or not we actually help others is not so much a question of our resources but one of our motivation. So we can understand the importance of this meditation in which we train our mind in love and compassion. With a fully trained mind we shall actually perform actions which benefit other beings. It is also said that this meditation on love and compassion is very powerful for accumulating a great amount of merit.

It is important to try to understand the whole process of this meditation with a rational understanding of the benefits of cultivating love and compassion. If we recall the story of Asanga, cultivating compassion can purify all one's negativities and enormously increase merit. All the benefits that you wish to give to others come from love and compassion, because without love and compassion you will have no care for the welfare of other beings. Without love and compassion you will not care if they lack happiness or if they are suffering. Think for example of the way people treat you. Think of the friend who truly loves or cares for you, who is always there whenever you need help with health or finance problems. Whereas if that friend has no love and compassion the way they relate to you is the complete opposite: if you face problems the friend is not there, if you lack enough money even to buy food then the friend does not care. They even try to avoid you when you have health problems.

You have to view the way you relate to others in this light. How much care and support you show to other beings depends upon how much love, compassion and sympathy you have. For example, if you have love for a friend then naturally you will try to help solve their problems. Their problems become your concern, so you benefit them.

In mundane life situations, where you must live harmoniously with others, giving each other essential mutual support, then the most important cause to create this is cultivating thoughts of love and compassion for each other. It is the same with our spiritual path where the basic cause of progress towards full enlightenment is love and compassion for other beings. Conversely without this attitude there is no way of achieving full enlightenment.

So if we seriously wish to follow a spiritual practice, we should not look outside ourselves since spiritual practice lies within, and that practice is to cultivate, nurture and increase this love and compassion for all other beings. The indication of your progress on the spiritual path is the growth of your love and compassion, rather than being able to perform supernatural acts such as levitation or walking through walls.

Whether we use the words 'Dharma' or 'spiritual practice' or 'meditation' the real cause to reach full enlightenment is to develop love and compassion, and as a way of developing this compassion we engage in this meditation of giving and taking.

We begin this meditation by developing compassion: wishing all sentient beings who are suffering to be free of their suffering. Then having cultivated this compassion, imagine taking from them all their suffering and its causes. If you are doing this meditation elaborately, then when you contemplate suffering, consider the First Noble Truth of suffering and the various types of suffering it describes. Then for the causes of suffering consider the Second Noble

Truth, and all the different types of causes of suffering. Having done this imagine taking from others all this suffering and its causes. Then do the 'giving' part of the meditation by cultivating love for all beings, then motivated by that love you imagine giving all other beings happiness, and the causes of happiness.

It is said that the taking and giving in this meditation should be done from your heart, because that is where the self-cherishing attitude resides. It is all to do with eradicating the self-cherishing attitude. We shall discuss this further next week.

Regardless of whether we are teaching or learning from others, it is important to relate the material to one's own mental continuum. For example if we say "Love and compassion is the root cause of all joy and happiness in the world", then to understand this, we must see that compassion and love are the source of all peace and happiness in our own life. When your practice is based upon your own personal experience, then whether you are a teacher or a student whatever practice you do can have some effect on your own mind, and be of benefit to listeners. Without some reference or connection to your own life, then no matter how elaborately you teach, it is just a gathering of knowledge, and there is no effect upon your own mind, nor does it inspire others to practise.

The Reincarnation of Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey

A number of students have been asking about the reincarnation of Geshe Dhargyey. It has been three years since he passed away. Friday must be auspicious for Geshe Dhargyey, he passed away on a Friday. Then he remained in meditation posture until Tuesday night.

It was decided to cremate his body, but that was technically illegal. However through having a good contact with the Mayor of that area, permission was granted within two hours. There were some auspicious signs. Although it was overcast earlier in the day, the sky cleared by the time of the ceremony and some saw a rainbow. Geshe Doga and Khensur Rinpoche were in a tent and saw three white birds fly over. Khensur Rinpoche interpreted this as Geshe Dhargyey's connection with Vajra Yogini.

Later some students went to India to make offerings, where they sought an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He took great interest in finding the reincarnation, and said that the reincarnation would appear, and when this happened he would check whether the reincarnation would be of benefit.

On his last visit to New Zealand, His Holiness said that the reincarnation had already been conceived and was in the womb, the father being from Eastern Tibet. At this time Thubten Rinpoche who is very specialised in performing rituals, sent search parties to Shilong in North-East India. The search party found eight candidates. The number was then reduced to five names, which were taken to His Holiness. He replied that he would check whether the reincarnation was one of these five candidates, and if not would indicate where the reincarnation would be found. Geshela has received notification from New Zealand that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has now stated that one of these candidates is the boy. They know the boy's name and that of his parents.

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